A Merging

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A Merging

by slasherbaby

Summary

> “Blood is to be expected.” Nigel spoke with a tongue that dripped molasses. His eyes were wide, his dark hair splayed like a fan over his forehead. “Blood is a small price to pay for our union, you know that better than anyone, Jack.”

Notes

> TW: Like Minds is it’s own trigger warning and this involves all the creepy stuff from the movie, read at your own discretion and be mindful of the tags!

Chapter 1: Got Your Bible and Your Gun

Chapter Notes

> The chapter title comes from the song Cruel World by Lana Del Rey.
>
> *I got your bible and your gun / You're fucking crazy / Oh, you're crazy for me*

Sat across from Nigel in the hallway, Alex couldn't find it in himself to imagine Nigel killing anyone. He was small, with his shoulders hunched in towards himself and his knees to his chest. The boy looked like he would fit in perfectly with another century, his pale skin and thin body calling back to a time where consumption ravaged the lands, not Nigel's lust for blood.

"Killing is such an extraordinary feeling, isn't it?"

But who had Nigel killed, besides birds? Susan, perhaps, but Alex felt like he had been the sole perpetrator of her death, completely responsible for letting Nigel see his interest in another. Alex could not visualize Nigel splitting her open, even when he had seen him, scalpel in hand, as he dissected creatures that had once been just as alive as Susan.

"I'll have my Maraclea… How do you feel?"

Alex shut his eyes. Out of everything Nigel had done, why did a simple question surprise Alex? He couldn't recall the last time anyone had asked him how he felt, not about anything. Even after his best friend's death, not a single person asked him how he was handling it, or how he felt.

"Jack?"

Alex opened his eyes, fixing them on Nigel. Fragile, splattered in blood, pajama wearing Nigel. It would take nothing to overpower the other boy. To grab him by his delicate neck and shake him, smash his head into the wall, scream into his face and demand if he knew just what the fuck he'd gotten them both into.

"How do you feel?" Nigel's eyes were squinted, his brow heavy and drawn in. Alex knew he was searching for his approval, his validation, his *yes Nigel, you are very smart and I feel very well and I am so happy with this turn of events and you are a very very good boy.*

"You set the whole thing up, didn't you?" Alex didn't know why he asked. It was obvious. Nigel was the puppet master, and Alex was just a marionette who realized far too late to cut himself free from the strings that bound him.

Nigel chuckled and reached out, his hand touching Alex's knee and lingering before pushing himself to his feet.

"Come on. We've got work to do."

-

Alex didn't know why he followed Nigel back into his parents room. He should have ran, far away from Nigel and the Colbie's and all of the bloody mess that he wanted to believe he had no part in creating. But he didn't run from it. He walked right back into it, his eyes on the ground, too afraid to look at the bodies for fear that they would have their eyes open.

It was only when he saw the photos that Mr. Colbie had been waving

around, now strewn over the wooden floor, that he realized what Nigel had meant only moments before.

He looked up from the pictures, disgust pooling inside him like the blood that pooled from the elder Colbie's chest. What the photos implied inspired more horror in him than the two bodies in the room.

"Jesus, she's your *mother* , Nigel."

"And yet, she loved me." Nigel's previous 'not a care in the world' attitude settled into something quieter, his eyes no longer fixed on Alex but behind him, looking to the past.

"And did *you* love her?"

Alex watched as Nigel stiffened, his hooded eyes grew wider, wetter, filled with hurt as if he was offended that Alex would even say such a thing. Alex had never seen Nigel look like that before, not even after he shot his father in the chest. His lack of response said enough to Alex.

Mother's were not something Alex knew much about, despite having longed for one many times in his life. But he knew enough about them to know that whatever Mrs. Colbie was doing to her son had nothing to do with motherhood.

"You're not touching her." Alex said with finality. "I won't let you, it's disgusting."

"And what about you and Susan?"

“I didn’t do it.”

“Oh, come on. I left you with her. I could smell you on her.”

“No.”

“Did you touch her?” Nigel parted his lips and walked forward, approaching Alex like he was prey. “I know you felt her.”

“No, no. I didn’t.”

“It doesn’t matter now, you can have your Maraclea,”

“Your mother is not your Maraclea, and Susan is not mine!” Alex nearly shouted, his hands shaking by his sides. He balled them into fists.

Nigel shook his head, his brow furrowing into something dangerous. “We are meant to be united, one way or-“

Something lit up in Nigel’s eyes, his scrunched up face going completely lax, as if he had stumbled across some hidden revelation. He looked even more dangerous than before, and the way he glanced at the shotgun on the floor was as obvious as the smell of gunpowder that clung to Alex’s hands.

“Oh, *Jack* . I can’t believe I didn’t see you sooner.”

Alex moved faster than he previously thought was possible, snatching the gun and holding it away from Nigel. But Nigel made no movement to take it from him, and instead of a fight, he simply looked pleased. The boy walked closer, letting the muzzle kiss his chest.

“You’ve known since our first night together, when you pressed your body against mine to hold me down, to use the chloroform on me… Did you realize it when I became limp under you? When I was docile for you… You used me then, didn’t you?”

“No, no.” Alex felt sick, horrified not only by what Nigel was saying, but how he was saying it. As if he was reading love poetry, his eyes all hooded and sultry, his voice low and pleased. “That’s not what I meant and you know it.”

Of course there was a grain of truth to Nigel’s words, there always was with him. But if Alex had felt anything stir inside him that night, it hadn’t been because Nigel was unconscious. Nigel wasn’t *handsome* , at least not in the way that handsome men were supposed to look. But he was *pretty* , extraordinarily pretty. With his bee-stung lips and perpetual pout, his lithe body and ebony hair…

Yes, taking the boy down a peg had felt so, very good for the brief moment it lasted, but there was more to it than that. And Alex’s late night fantasies never included Nigel being *dead* , even if some of them had blood streaming from his mouth, and bruises decorating Alex’s knuckles.

Nigel laughed breathily, his eyes heavy-lidded as he reached out, his fingers dancing over the barrel of the shotgun.

“You didn’t touch her, because you already touched me. Did you spill

inside of me?" He asked, his voice a breath away from a whisper, far too seductive for the circumstance. "I didn't feel sore… were you gentle with me, Jack? Or did you use my mouth instead?"

Alex made a sound of disgust, though his stomach twisted with excitement at the thought. "You're deluded."

Nigel almost looked disappointed when he realized that Alex, in fact, was telling the truth. He schooled his expression quickly, as he always did, and wrapped his hand around the barrel of the gun. He lowered it, no longer letting it rest under his collarbone, and walked out of the room.

Alex stood there with a look that he knew must have looked ridiculously dumb, until he finally got the courage to look out the doorway and see where he was going.

Nigel was in the hallway, his head turned to face Alex. He only had to lift a hand to beckon Alex, the look in his eyes sparkling. He called to Alex like a ship is called to a dim lighthouse, and Alex was ready to be dashed against the rocks.

Against his better judgment, Alex set down the shotgun and followed.

Chapter 2: Heart Shaped Bed

Chapter Notes

> The chapter title comes from the song Heart Shaped Bed by Nicole Dollanganger.
>
> *So get the room with the heart shaped bed | Pretend it's our wedding, pretend we just met | Make something gross feel romantic | Make me so no one will ever want me again | 'Cause when I sleep with faith, I only find a corpse in my arms on awakening*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This was my bedroom.” Nigel spoke quietly, and he closed the door once they were both inside. Alex almost wanted to tell him that it didn’t matter, there was no one around to hear them, but he didn’t.

Besides a few basic pieces of furniture, the room was empty. If there had ever been any personality in it, it had long since been discarded, stripped of anything that could show interest. The bedding was immaculately made, not a wrinkle in sight. Alex ran his hand over the duvet. It was rough against his palm. It felt cold.

Nigel was across the room, standing in front of an old wardrobe.

“Was?”

“I’m dead.” His voice was only half joking, far too light for the topic at hand. It was the same type of teasing tone that he used that night they spoke of Jacks and Spades and fucking Templar blood. “The only room I shall need now is a tomb.”

“But you’re not dead.” Alex said dumbly.

“I would have been.” Nigel answered simply. “You were going to shoot me, in my parents bedroom, when you held the gun to my chest. If my father hadn’t taken what was mine, I would be dead.”

“Taken what was… yours?” Alex asked in disbelief.

“Your bullet.” Nigel turned away from Alex, facing the wardrobe as he rummaged through it. “I was misguided before, but I can see clearly now. I was meant to be your Maraclea, and he took it from me.”

“ *Christ* , he was protecting you, Nigel.”

Nigel paused in his search, his deft fingers running along something Alex could not see. “Protecting me has never been something he was interested in… No, Jack. He was not *protecting* me. I was his greatest shame, and when my mother’s eyes found me, I became his greatest rival.”

“You’re fucked.” Alex whispered. “You’re *all* fucked.”

That same look of hurt on Nigel’s face from before, sharp enough to make Alex look away from the other boy, focusing instead on the creaseless bed.

“I didn’t ask for it.” Nigel said quietly. His voice was painfully soft, like a child trying to convince their parents that they hadn’t broken it on purpose.

Alex’s throat ran dry. He had no idea what to say. What could he say? If it had been Josh, he would have laughed. Told Nigel to stop acting like such a cunt, tell him to get the fuck over it. If Raj were in his

place…. Well, Raj might have known something better to say, but he was far too smart to get caught up in any of this. Probably would have called for the cops the second he heard the gunshot. Probably never would have showed up to Nigel's house in the first place.

Thankfully, Nigel didn't let them sit in silence for long.

"I need a moment. Will you wait outside the room?"

"Oh right, I'll leave you alone for what?" Alex shook his head in disbelief. "For you to off yourself and leave me to clean this mess? I don't think so."

"I would not take your destiny from you, Jack. I give you my word." The words of a murderer shouldn't have been able to soothe Alex's frayed nerves, but Nigel, despite all his wrongs, had never *actually* lied to him before. "I'll call for you when I'm ready."

Alex left the room. He stood outside the doorway like he was on guard, and when Nigel called for him, he dutifully went back inside.

"What the fuck," Alex whispered. He wasn't particularly shocked, because despite how he should have felt, Nigel looked entirely at home in a wedding dress and veil.

Perhaps it was normal that he wasn't shocked- he had just shot a man, after all. It was hard to find anything surprising after taking a life. And Nigel looked so… pretty. He wasn't standing awkwardly, Nigel never looked awkward, even when Alex dangled him out of a train car. Now, Nigel looked beyond relaxed. He looked proud, despite the blood still splattered on his neck and face.

“It was my mothers.”

“ *Fuck* ,” Alex swore under his breath. “What the fuck…”

He wished desperately that he could find the willpower to leave Nigel’s old room, to simply leave. To walk into the rain and disappear out of the other boy’s life. He wished that what was about to happen wouldn’t, because he knew where Nigel was going with this. But more than anything, he wished that he didn’t want to stay. To play into Nigel’s sickness, into his trauma, into the horror of it all. But it wasn’t only Nigel’s now, was it? They made the horror together. They were both sick, and he couldn’t leave Nigel now.

He doubted if he could ever leave him, truly.

“It was given to her by her mother, and her mother before her.” Nigel walked towards him, his long, multilayered skirts swaying with each step. It was a little too long for him, dragging on the floor. “You fell in love with Susan while she was dressed in a gown.”

“Don’t talk about her.”

“You claim she’s not your Maraclea, and yet you still think of her.” Nigel’s pretty mouth curled into a sneer, but the ugliness of his expression did nothing to mask his beauty.

For some God-forsaken reason, Alex wanted to placate Nigel, soothe him instead of rile him up. He wasn’t even worried about his safety, now, even when Nigel had proved himself to be deadly when provoked.

“No,” He murmured, reaching out to grasp Nigel’s waist. The fabric was old, and strangely soft. He ran his hands along it, tracing the fanciful lace and ribbon. “I just don’t want to think of her now.”

It seemed enough to calm Nigel, who’s sneer of contempt turned upside down, gloating, the cat who got the cream.

The year before, Alex had brought a senior girl to the academy's winter ball. The two of them had danced rather stiffly, uncomfortable as the chaperones made sure everyone was waltzing properly, but the night had ended on a good note. He lost his virginity to her in a broom closet, rushed and halfway terrified that he’d hurt her or not get her off. She had been a good sport about it, and let him soothe apologize with his tongue against her slit after he came far too quickly to bring her to climax.

When she graduated, she moved to Australia. After a few letters back and forth, they lost contact with each other, as such things usually go. He hadn’t been surprised, only a little hurt.

Now, he was happy that she left. He didn’t want to think about what Nigel would do to her if she had stayed.

Holding Nigel felt entirely different than dancing with her. Back then, his hands had felt far too large and too uncertain on her trim waist, and he was too busy thinking about not stepping on her feet to enjoy himself.

Her dress had been made from satin, slick and form fitting, showing off her curves.

Nigel’s dress fit him as well as could be expected.

Too big in the shoulders and a bit tight in the waist. The lace sleeves, however, seemed as if they had been tailored specifically to fit him. They decorated his pale forearms and wrists like ribbon wrapped around bone, delicately matching the mantilla that haphazardly rested on top of his dark hair.

Alex didn't know much about dresses, but there was no doubt in his mind that the dress was old based on the style of it alone. It was high collared, with a lace ruffle showing off his chest and many layers of skirts.

"Why are you wearing this?" Alex asked, though he didn't know why. He already knew what was happening. It was fated.

"I'm your Maraclea, Jack. Your lost love. Your *betrothed* ." Nigel was unashamed in his explanation.

"What about your parents, we have to clean-"

"And we *will* , but first, we must celebrate our wedding night."

"I… what?"

Nigel smirked. "It's alright if you're a virgin, but I *know* you understand how a marriage is consummated."

"I'm not a virgin." Alex couldn't even be bothered to sound offended, despite the red flushing his cheeks. He would be the delusional one if he tried to deny that he wanted Nigel, he'd wanted him for a while

now. Still, somehow it felt wrong. Like there was more to it than their connection, their destiny. “I’ve done it before.”

“I haven’t.” Nigel spoke openly, not a hint of shame in his words. “You’re my first.”

The words brought Alex back to another night, one that seemed to have taken place years ago, when Nigel brought him down into his strange basement.

“ *Okay* ?” The past echoed from Nigel’s lips. “ *First* .”

Alex let Nigel guide him to the bed, and watched as Nigel laid himself back against it, creasing the duvet under his weight. The veil had become even more displaced, scrunched up behind Nigel’s head and folded over his shoulders, but it did nothing to displace the almost dreamlike state Alex was in.

He was a moth to the flame as Nigel coaxed him forward by hitching up his skirts, showing off calves that were as pale as the dress itself.

Alex came easily, kneeling on the bed between Nigel’s spread legs, but stopped him before he could expose himself further.

“We can’t.” He didn’t know what possessed him to speak, because he *wanted* to so badly. But Nigel… he was a virgin, and Alex had never done it the way Nigel expected him to. His only time had been aided by the girl’s wetness, and even then, he had been exceedingly gentle.

“Why not? I know you want me, Jack. You want to touch me, you want to *have* me.”

“We *can’t* , we… we don’t have anything to… ease the way.” Alex stumbled over his words, unsure. “I’ll hurt you.”

Nigel pushed himself up onto his forearms, a smile on his lips. “You’ve never been concerned about hurting me before. Do you feel different now that you’ve realized I’m your Ma-“

Alex didn’t want to make Nigel bleed , but if he heard the name Maraclea one more time, he just might. So he grabbed Nigel by his neck, fist wrapping around that delicate lace, and pulled him forward, crushing their lips together with teeth-knocking enthusiasm, and splitting Nigel’s lip open in the process.

Chapter End Notes

> I think it’s kind of funny how in the movie they talk about Maraclea being betrothed to a Templar knight when uh… those fellas definitely were not allowed to get married. But whatever, we’ll roll with how the movie portrays it because it’s what Alex and Nigel believe!
>
> If you’d like to see what I had in mind for Nigel’s dress while writing this chapter, you can check them out
>
> here
>
> and
>
> here!

Chapter 3: Chapel

Chapter Notes

TW: dubcon, pain during sex, references to CSA

This chapter is a little different, as it starts out from Nigel's perspective and then switches to Alex. I've updated the tags and rating for this chapter, it's a lot darker than the previous ones, so please heed the warnings.

The chapter title is from the song Chapel by Nicole Dollanganger.

I'm going to get married today | So please don't touch me, please stay away | I know I'm not good, I've never been true | But you know that I love him and I don't love you

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nigel obliged Alex when the other boy asked him to take a few fingers first, but Nigel could not find room in his heart to let Alex stroke him. As much as he wanted to be good for Alex, to be the submissive wife on their wedding night, he couldn't allow him to do it.

After the third attempt from Alex, Nigel grabbed his wrist.

"Don't."

Nigel knew that if Alex wanted to, he could easily overpower him and simply take what he wanted. But Nigel had a plan, if Alex would not cease his attempts. He would roll onto his belly and present himself for Alex, but keep his front pressed close to the bed. That way, when Alex took him from behind, there would be no way for him to reach where Nigel didn't want him to go.

Hopefully, it would not have to come to that. For Nigel wanted Alex to have him on his back, with his legs wrapped around Alex's hips and

their faces close together. The proper way to consummate a marriage.

“Alright, I won’t.”

Nigel smiled, thankful, and let go of Alex’s wrist.

When Alex entered him, it was aided by spit and a bit of brute force, but Nigel didn’t mind. It was supposed to hurt. Only when Alex began to move in earnest, did Nigel feel the painful chafe ease. Something hot was guiding Alex’s way, something that came from Nigel. He did not have to look down to know it was his blood, pride puffing up his chest from his body providing the wetness that would bring Alex’s pleasure.

The pain in his stomach didn’t go away as easily, but Nigel had never been one to care too much about pain. It was normal, after all. It was righteous.

So he looked up into Alex’s eyes with nothing less than devotion, the ghost of a smile playing on his lips. Alex shut his eyes then, refusing to meet Nigels, and pressed his lips together into a tight line.

Nigel’s smile returned to the afterlife.

What have you done? Alex had asked him earlier that night, standing in the wake of his mother’s murder. He had looked at Nigel the same way Nigel’s father had when he had walked in on him in his mother’s bed.

Nigel stared at Alex’s eyelids. He didn’t need to ponder why the other wasn’t looking at him. He didn’t need to ask.

What have you done? What did you do?"

It was and always had been *what did you do,* and Nigel had an inkling that it would remain that way until he took his last breath. *Why did she do it* would never be asked in the right context, and his mother would never have to answer it. His father had asked his mother *why* , but not *why are you touching our son?* Or, *how old was he when this started?* Or, *why did you tell him it was just a game?*

A game that they never, ever, could tell father about.

Not that Nigel ever wanted to tell his father. Even though his mother had sworn him to secrecy, Nigel always knew that his father could tell what was going on. But if Nigel confirmed his father's suspicions, nothing would be done about it, besides perhaps his mother getting yelled at more than usual, and Nigel receiving more beatings. So he stayed quiet, ignored the lack of questions, and stuffed himself into a small bottle, deep in the back of his mind, hidden carefully behind rows of knowledge about history and knights and magic.

But Alex asked a question.

What had he done?

Not why would a mother be in bed with her son? Why did silence hurt worse than speaking? Why did his father send him away for school after so many years?

What *had* he done?

“Nigel,” Alex brought him back to reality, his eyes finally open, fixed upon Nigel. “Is it too much?”

“Jack,” Nigel called for his lover, his knight, his *husband* . He wrapped his arms around his Jack’s shoulders and pulled him closer, resting their foreheads together. “ *Jack* .”

A warm puff of air against Nigel’s lips, not quite a kiss, made Nigel’s cheeks burn as he burnt between his thighs.

-

Laying in bed with Nigel, Alex felt like he had wronged the other in a grand, incomprehensible way. Thinking about the two bodies cooling in the other room did nothing to quell this guilt, even though Alex knew that Nigel had been the one to orchestrate their deaths.

The blood between Nigel’s thighs didn’t do much to help the guilt, either.

He should have been more gentle with Nigel, as he had been far rougher than a husband ought to be to their wife. Alex had to hold back a snort. There was something about Nigel calling himself Alex’s wife, his fucking *Maraclea*, that made Alex feel delirious.

At least he had made Nigel come from his thrusts, though it had surprised Alex as much as it surprised Nigel when it happened. After, Nigel had turned his head away from Alex, face red and pinched, tears spilling from the corners of his eyes in fat streaks down his temples, running into his hair. Only when Alex agreed to finish inside of him did Nigel relax once more.

“It’s normal.” Nigel told him afterward, looking up at him from where he rested his head on Alex’s chest.

Nothing about this was normal. Alex wanted to laugh. He wanted to take Nigel and shake him. He wanted to kiss him. He wanted to apologize.

He did none of these, and asked a question instead.

“What’s normal?”

“A wife bleeding when her husband takes her maidenhood. Blood is to be expected.” Nigel spoke with a tongue that dripped sugar. His eyes were wide, his dark hair splayed like a fan over his forehead. “Blood is a small price to pay for our union, *you* know that better than anyone, Jack.”

“You aren’t my wife, Nigel.” Alex spoke softly, shaking his head ever so slightly, like *he* didn’t even believe what he was saying.

“I’m more than your wife, Jack. I’m your harvest widow.” Nigel smiled. Alex could see how his brow twitched, eyebrows pulling inwards for a moment. “I’ll await you here.”

“You‘re a fucking idiot if you think that I’m leaving you here.” Alex shook his head. “Neither of us are dying, Nigel.” Even if they deserved death, Alex thought. Even if the world would be a better place without either of them in it.

“What did you expect from this? Where do you think we will go from here?” Nigel narrowed his eyes.

“I don’t know.” Alex cupped the back of Nigel’s head, fingers twining through ebony strands. It was strange how he felt for Nigel, the way they melted into each other. “They already suspect me for Susan, and you aren’t exactly subtle. Everyone knows that you’re…”

“That I’m what, Jack?” Nigel's voice was sharp.

“That you’re a freak. You play with dead animals for fun, Nigel, and you don’t have a single friend. Once they notice your parents are missing, and they will notice it eventually, it’ll all be over for you. You don’t have your father’s sway in the order to protect you, and I won’t be able to do *anything* to protect you once when they realize I’m your fucking accomplice-“

“I don’t need you to protect me,”

“Yes you do!” Alex curled his fingers through Nigel’s hair, holding him tight enough to hurt. Nigel didn’t even give him the satisfaction of a wince. Alex had to hold himself back from yanking it back harder, bending his neck to really make him hurt. The wet, ridiculous look in Nigel’s eyes was the only reason he didn’t do it. “You need me, Nigel.”

“If I need you,” Nigel strained against Alex’s grip, moving his face forward until their noses were almost touching, his teeth bared. “Then you need me just as much, *Jack* .”

“Yeah,” Alex released his hair. Nigel had never once spoken a lie to him. They were connected, and now, they were united. It was sickness, but it was fate. “I do.”

Nigel stared into Alex’s eyes with burning intensity, searching for any

sign of deceit. Apparently he passed the scrutiny, because soon Nigel was settling himself back on Alex's chest, his palm pressed to Alex's heart and his chin resting on his knuckles.

Alex sighed. "I do."

Chapter End Notes

I started out writing this from Alex's perspective, but I got a bit of writer's block and decided to start over from Nigel's perspective to try and get a better feel for where I wanted to go with it. I was going to only post one after I finished, but thought it would be interesting to split between them instead.

Chapter 4: Beauty and Rage

Chapter Notes

> TW: unprotected sex, discussions of gender identity, very outdated ideas about marital roles
>
> The chapter title is from the song Ultraviolence by Lana Del Rey.
>
> *He used to call me DN | That stood for deadly nightshade | 'Cause I was filled with poison | But blessed with beauty and rage*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The dismemberment and subsequent burning of Nigel's parents was astonishingly easy. Alex expected to find it impossible, but by the time he stood in front of the mock-fire pit, he realized that he hadn't even thrown up. Originally, Alex wanted Nigel to handle everything. After he came down from his post-coital bliss, however, he thought better of it. Seeing Nigel limp around the bedroom as he changed back into his pajamas was enough motivation for Alex to stomach his disgust, and handle the heavy lifting.

If Alex had any other reasons for staying with Nigel while he was around the bodies… well. It was better not to dwell on it.

They didn't return to the school immediately, instead going to the old cinema for a late-night showing. At the box office, Alex pointedly ignored how they were playing Hitchcock's Psycho, and bought two tickets for Silent Hill instead. They shared a box of popcorn as they watched, and Nigel sucked the butter off of Alex's fingers in the darkness of the back row.

Nigel only became interested in the movie when they got into the witch hunts and burnings that took place in the small town. Alex noted Nigel's disappointment that instead of a stake, the victims were placed on a grill contraption and lowered into the flames.

“Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake,” Nigel whispered to Alex as they watched, his lips pressing so close to the shell of Alex’s ear that he might as well have been kissing it. “Alongside over fifty other Templar Knights. They were called Satanists. Heretics of the church who turned their backs on God. Tortured, condemned, and burned.”

“They were only heretics because King Philip couldn’t pay his debt,” Alex murmured under his breath, watching as the woman on the screen was lowered into the pit of flames.

“They were martyrs.”

Alex turned to face Nigel. The boy’s blue eyes reflected the fire from the screen, dancing across them until his pupils were completely engulfed.

“Martyr blood is powerful, Jack.” Nigel pressed his index and middle finger to the inside of Alex’s wrist, pressing down to feel his pulse. “Can’t you feel it? It’s running through our veins.”

They took the train back, with Nigel taking a seat next to Alex instead of across from him, their thighs pressed together and Alex’s arm slung around the back of Nigel’s seat.

Nigel enjoyed the movie, and Alex couldn’t pass up an opportunity to tease him for it.

“Perhaps we should go to America after everything settles since you liked it so much. I could see you right at home with those nurses, considering your passion for playing dress-up.”

“It took place in West Virginia.” Nigel corrected, a smile pulling at the corners of his cherry lips.

“Yeah, whatever.” Alex wished he could slip his hand into Nigel's, treat their evening like it was any other night and he was bringing Nigel on the date that he and Susan never got to go on. It was easy to pretend like the ticket stubs in his coat pocket were there as mementos, not an alibi in case they were called in to be questioned. But the idea of holding Nigel's bloody hands made him feel sick to his stomach, so he went without.

“I would go anywhere with you.” Nigel continued easily. “Will you do the same for me?”

“What the hell kind of question is that?” Alex scoffed, his tone accusatory as Nigel’s stare burned into his skin. After a minute of relentless staring, Alex let his arm fall from the back of the seat to wrap around Nigel’s shoulders. He wasn’t gentle with how he pulled Nigel closer, his fingers digging in hard enough to leave bruises. “I told you I’m not leaving you here, alright? So stop fucking asking, please. I won’t ask you again.”

When the detective called him in for further questioning about Susan's murder, Alex confessed.

He told the detective that yes, he asked Susan out, but he never actually intended on hooking up with her at the theater. It wouldn’t even have been a proper date, since it was Alex tagging along at the last minute, and he hadn’t thought that she would care that he stood her up since all of her friends were going as well.

When the detective asked why he would lie about such a thing, Alex felt a lot less brave than he'd been when he first strolled into the station.

It turns out that thinking about what would happen if he fucked up his alibi was an easy way to summon bravery.

So he lied and said he only wanted to use her as a cover. If any of his friends, or if his father asked where he'd been, he wanted to be able to say he was on a date with someone from the girl's college. It would be safer that way, he said quietly, looking down at the metal table in front of him, because if his father found out that he had really spent the night with his boyfriend, things could become dangerous for the both of them.

The detective looked so uncomfortable by his admission that Alex had to hold back laughter. He covered it up with a cough before continuing on about how his father had become suspicious of how much time he was spending with the other boy.

Once Alex mentioned Nigel's name, the detective went from very uncomfortable, to sitting-on-hot-coals uncomfortable.

It was no surprise that the detective was a part of his father's order. News of John Colbie stepping down from his position and taking an extended vacation to sort out his deviant behavior had obviously reached him.

When Nigel was called in to corroborate Alex's story, he did so perfectly.

In the weeks that followed, Nigel and Alex formed a routine. They ate together during meal times and sat side-by-side during free time. On the weekends they would walk down to the cinema, and when night fell, Alex could always rely on Nigel creeping into his room to warm his bed.

During those nights, they made plans to leave after Nigel's birthday, which was only a few weeks after Alex's. They didn't know exactly where they were going to go. At first, Alex proposed that they would first stay in Scotland, as he had family there. The Scotland idea lasted for about two seconds since he doubted the other Forbes would be too keen on allowing Nigel to stay with them.

It didn't take long for Alex's father to notice how much time he was spending with Nigel. After Josh's death, his father began to keep an even more watchful eye on Alex, making sure that his grief didn't get in the way of his obligations.

So Alex was called into the headmaster's office, and he wasn't exactly surprised about it.

He kept his hands shoved into his trouser pockets, even after his father told him to take a seat, and gazed out of the window behind his father's desk. It was a cold day, but all Alex could think about was getting out of the stuffy room and going out to the bench where Nigel liked to read.

"You can stop with this petulant look, Forbes. I did not call you in to scold you." His father waited until he looked at him to continue. "While your academic achievements have always been recognizable, I'm told that the quality of your work, as well as your scores, have increased in every one of your classes. Well done."

"So why am I here, if I haven't earned a *scolding*." Alex drawled in a

bored tone. "You obviously didn't call me just to praise me."

“I have also been told that you are spending quite a large amount of time with the Colbie boy.”

Alex lifted his shoulders into a half-hearted shrug.

“And under the circumstances, I do not believe that it would be wise for you to continue pursuing a friendship with him, academically or otherwise.”

“This is bollocks.” Alex scoffed.

“Forbes,” His father’s face pinched together into a familiar expression of anger.

“What happened to Nigel being a *brilliant young man?”*

“As I said, the circumstances-“

“Isn’t collaboration an important part of learning, headmaster?” Alex shook his head slightly, a smile of disbelief teasing his lips as he repeated his father’s words back to him. “You were the one who told me that it’s important for my future to spend time with someone who challenges me academically, you said to make him feel welcome, and now that I am, you tell me to stop *pursuing our friendship.”*

“Until very recently, I was under the impression that you despised the young man. You made it quite clear how much you disliked him when

I asked you to make him feel welcome."

"Yeah, well things change."

"Despite your childish behavior, I'm going to speak to you like an adult, Alex, as I know you are an intelligent young man and have the brain capacity to listen." His father waited a few moments before folding his hands on top of his desk. "Certain situations have come to light in regard to the Colbie family. As it is, the Colbie name carries nothing but scandal, and I will not have you put your future at stake by associating with it."

"Oh, so you want me to tell him to fuck off because what, his father did something naughty and your precious brotherhood didn't like it?"

"Must you always go against every single thing I say? I tell you that it would be enriching for you to spend time with the boy, and you refuse, but when I agree that you shouldn't be associating with him, you refuse!"

"You're impossible." Alex still wore a smile, but it held no warmth. "I can't do anything to please you, can I? No matter what I do, it will never be good enough."

Alex's father clenched his jaw, making the angry vein in his forehead stand out prominently. When Alex was a child, he used to stare at that vein in regret and wish that he could go back in time to study more or hold his tongue, so that he could smooth out his father's disappointment. Now, all Alex wanted to do was leave.

"That is enough, you're acting like a child."

Alex laughed. “No, no, it’s not actually enough, is it? Because I’m not enough, right?”

“I said that’s enough!” His father yelled, his voice echoing off the walls of the headmaster’s office.

Alex shut his mouth, his teeth clacking together from the effort. He stared at his father, and though he tried, he could not feel a single ounce of affection for him. He wondered briefly if Nigel knew how it felt. Did his father also only feel like a *father* to him when he was yelling?

Alex stood without another word, not bothering to listen to his father’s indignant calls for him to return, and left the office. Nigel was standing across the hall, and Alex wasted no time in grabbing him by the arm and dragging him to the nearest utility closet.

The first time Nigel noticed it was after they consummated their union.

It was clear that Alex was far kinder to him with his spend cooling between Nigel’s thighs. While disposing of the bodies, Alex handled the heavy lifting almost entirely and put Nigel on cleaning duty instead of dismemberment. It went on throughout the rest of the night, with Alex continuing to treat him with more consideration than before. He even bought him popcorn at the cinema.

At first, Nigel thought that Alex’s behavior came from the solidification of their bond. He let Alex into his body to take his pleasure and spill inside of him, to mark him with his seed. Alex not only claimed his body that night but completed the merging of their minds.

But at breakfast the morning after, Alex had shown Nigel a cold face. Nigel had approached him, assuming that they would eat together, only to be greeted by a scoff.

“What do you want?”

Standing before Alex with his tray in his hands, Nigel had said nothing.

“Do you expect me to pull your chair out for you?” Alex gave him a smile then, stretching his plush lips cruelly over sharp teeth. “Fuck off, freak.”

Nigel went without breakfast entirely and silently left the hall. Ignoring the protest from his stomach was the easy part. The coldness in Alex’s eyes was far less forgettable.

That night, Nigel snuck into Alex’s room. He woke the other with a whisper, sitting on the floor by the head of his bed. When Alex sat up, Nigel scooted forward on his knees to fix himself between Alex’s legs and reached into his pants.

Alex used him without mercy or care. One of his hands fisted into Nigel’s hair and the other gripped around his jaw to use as leverage while he fucked his mouth. There was no way for Nigel to keep his composure, as it was impossible not to gag from the battering his throat took. After Nigel swallowed his release, Alex pressed his lips to Nigel’s forehead. Sweaty with perspiration and smelling of toothpaste, Alex murmured how *fucking good* Nigel was.

The tears that wet Nigel’s cheeks and the burning in his throat were a

worthy trade, as Alex's words alone warmed Nigel's naval better than the finest of bourbons. He continued to reap the benefits into the next day when Alex sat with him during every meal they took in the dining hall.

If Nigel didn't have so much insight into Alex's mind, he might have believed that the old sayings about men only thinking about sex were true. Men, Nigel thought, were strange creatures. And though Alex's greatness easily surpassed the average, he was still a man. A man destined for greatness, but a man nonetheless.

Alex thought highly of himself, expecting those around him to recognize him as a figure of authority and show him the proper respect. That meant he enjoyed it when Nigel got on his knees in front of him. Nigel worshiped Alex like that, stroking both his cock and his ego, puffing him up with pride.

Nigel didn't care to be worshiped or stroked, but he did enjoy it when Alex bent him over or stuck his fingers into his mouth and told him to suck. Nigel's pleasure came when Alex was filling him up, his breath hot against Nigel's ear as he called him his *Maraclea.*

It was during those times that Nigel let himself get lost in Alex. He wished that he had more than just the one wedding dress, and he would imagine himself in a 12th-century chemise and tunic, long and to his feet. In his mind, Alex would simply lift up his skirts when he wanted to ravage his body, and Nigel would always be ready to perform his wifely duties, hoping desperately that Alex's seed would take root inside him.

Nigel knew how men thought of themselves from observation, and he knew how women thought of themselves by the same method. Still, he had never felt like much of either, so he had no personal experience to use as a guide. Man, boy, woman, girl; all words that Nigel never felt any personal attachment to. Nigel didn't dwell on his own gender very often, for it mattered very little to him. To him, it was simple. He was

Maraclea and he was Jack's wife. He was Nigel and he was Alex's boyfriend, though using the word *boyfriend* often made his stomach knot with worry.

Boyfriend was not a synonym for *forever* and felt extremely inadequate in describing the profoundness of Nigel and Alex's connection.

But Alex seeking him out during the day eased Nigel's worries, even though their trysts in broom closets or dark hallways often meant that Alex would forgo lube and stretching for spit and force. Nigel was okay with either, truly. The pain was easy to deal with, and the latter meant he would be limping more than usual. Alex's eyes always lingered on him after he had been particularly rough, and depending on Alex's mood, he would either smirk or frown when he noticed how Nigel winced sitting down.

When Nigel saw Alex fleeing the headmaster's office, he knew exactly what Alex needed. They were connected, after all, their minds so in tune with each other that Alex didn't even need to ask for Nigel to give his permission before he grabbed him.

Nigel was roughly shoved into the utility closet, the back of his head slamming into a mop. Angry hands grabbed his shoulders and spun him, before one of them pressed hard against his face, holding him in place with his cheek squished against the wall.

Alex shoved Nigel's trousers completely to the ground, and Nigel stepped out of them quickly to allow room for him to spread his legs. The sound of a zipper was the only confirmation Nigel needed to know that Alex wasn't planning on taking a long time, since he was only pulling his cock out.

A crinkling noise had him furrowing his brow and he began fighting back against the hand holding his head, trying to look behind him.

They had never used condoms before, and the notion that Alex would use a barrier instead of filling him properly made Nigel's initial arousal turn into anger.

"If you would rather spill inside a piece of rubber than me, you can enjoy your hand instead." Nigel seethed, all angry and puffed up like a temperamental cat that had enough of being pet.

"Will you fucking calm down, please?" Alex whispered back harshly before Nigel felt a finger prodding against his entrance. It was slick, sliding in without the burn that Nigel had grown to expect from spit. "It's lube."

Nigel deflated, his anger melting away just as quickly as it appeared. "So you'll-"

"Yes, I'm going to come in you." Alex huffed as he fingered Nigel roughly. "You're such a fucking freak. Aren't you embarrassed that you're so desperate for my come?"

"Were you thinking of being gentle to your Maraclea, Jack?" Nigel countered, arching his back as much as he could in the cramped closet. "Carrying that in your pocket all day for my comfort. Such a *doting* husband."

Alex curled his hand to cover Nigel's mouth, and despite Nigel not nearly being stretched enough, replaced his finger with his cock.

Chapter End Notes

Here are some of my thoughts on this chapter if you're interested in checking them out!

- Alex keeps switching from seeing Nigel as a freak who has done horrible things and ought to be taught a lesson/show Alex respect, to seeing him as this super damaged, fragile person who doesn't know any better than to let Alex take advantage of him.

- Nigel, on the other hand, isn't either of those things. The world isn't black and white, and Nigel can't be placed into a stereotype. He doesn't fit completely into 'evil perpetrator' or 'traumatized victim.' Nigel is multifaceted and Alex is struggling to wrap his head around it.

Chapter 5: The Most Empty

Chapter Notes

TW: discussions of trauma and mental health in an ignorant way, suicidal ideation, very slight body dysphoria (kinda)

The title chapter is from the song Rabid by Nicole Dollanganger.

You're the darkest horse that I've ever seen | Of all the things you fuck, I'm the most empty | And no blood for you will ever be enough | Can't bury anything without digging it up

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Saturday night before Nigel's birthday, Alex brought him to the cinema. They had seen many movies since they started their little routine, and Alex had grown to know Nigel's taste pretty well.

Casino Royale had been unable to keep Nigel's attention (though Alex didn't mind in the slightest, as after Nigel got bored fifteen minutes in he focused on giving Alex a handy instead). *The Da Vinci Code,* however, not only kept Nigel's eyes glued to the screen, but also inspired Nigel to keep Alex up for hours into the night to talk about it.

Nigel never picked which movie they would see, leaving it completely up to Alex and never complaining about the ones he didn't enjoy. It quickly became a game for Alex, trying to figure out which ones Nigel would like the best. Horrors were always an easy option, which was no surprise.

Oculus had been a resounding success on Alex's part, particularly because it ended with Nigel pressing his body extra close that night, chuckling in his ear about how they should cover up the mirrors. Gory slasher movies were fine as well, though they mostly involved Nigel teasing about anatomical inaccuracies when people were being gutted.

They only left the theater early once, and it had been Alex's decision to do so. They were watching some silly horror movie, a *Black Christmas* remake that was pretty terrible. Alex was mostly just pleased to be sitting there with Nigel, his hand resting casually on one of Nigel's thighs. Alex felt the second Nigel became tense, when it was revealed what the villain's mother had been doing to her son, who she had locked away in the attic for her own pleasure.

Nigel didn't say a word when Alex took him by the arm and left the theater, nor did he speak on the way home. Later that night, Alex pretended to be asleep when Nigel began to cry, silent tears wetting Alex's chest.

There was nothing that looked particularly good that was coming out around Nigel's birthday, so Alex chose to take him to something easy instead. It was some zombie flick called 22 Days Later, and the trailer looked just as gloomy as his lover.

Alex thought it had been decent enough, but Nigel, to Alex's surprise, was enthralled with it. He'd been so interested in the film that he ignored the popcorn completely. After it was over, Alex bought them a basket of fish and chips to share and they spent the rest of the afternoon walking around, window shopping. Well, more like *Alex* was window shopping, while Nigel described his favorite parts of the movie in detail as if he had been the only one paying attention and he *really* wanted to make sure Alex understood it.

For someone who was usually quiet, Nigel could talk until his throat became sore when he was interested in something. He was easy to please, too. All he needed to be kept happy was a nod, or some kind of confirmation that *yes, Alex is listening,* and *yes, Alex is understanding.*

At one point, they passed by a couple. The man was pushing a stroller while the woman cradled her swollen belly, happy smiles decorating their faces. Alex didn't look at them twice.

Nigel couldn't tear his eyes off them.

When they got back to the school, Nigel went straight to his own room. He didn't sneak into Alex's room, and he didn't show up at breakfast. Alex waited until lunch to go to his room but found the door locked. When knocking on it yielded no results, Alex threatened to break it down if Nigel didn't come out.

It almost made him ashamed, of how much he sounded like his father, but at least it got Nigel to prove he hadn't hung himself.

Nigel stood in front of an old, floor-length mirror. He was shirtless, showing off skin that was so pale it could have been translucent.

"You should have killed me," Nigel told him, his eyes refusing to leave the mirror, staring at the flat of his abdomen. "I cannot bear your destiny like this. You cannot give it to me, no matter how much you put inside me."

Alex wanted to fight him with logic, it was his first instinct, to combat Nigel's fantasies with reason, but he couldn't think of what to say.

"I am barren, Jack."

"You're a boy," Alex said dumbly.

"I am a graveyard." Nigel traced over his naval. "You put your love in me to die."

“Nigel-“

“Why didn’t you kill me?” Blue eyes flicked up to meet Alex in the mirror.

“Do we really have to do this again?”

“Maraclea,” Nigel whispered. “How can I be your harvest widow if you don’t bury me, Jack?”

“Can you fucking drop it, please?” Alex shook his head and came up behind Nigel, wrapping his arms around the other boy’s waist. Nigel struggled against it at first, but it was no use. Whatever was going on in Nigel’s head took up too much energy, and he had none left to fight off Alex. So he melted into the embrace, his knees buckling slightly and his head falling back against Alex’s neck.

Alex pressed a kiss to the back of Nigel’s head, inhaling the scent of his sweet-smelling shampoo, before tucking him under his chin. He wished that he were older, wiser, perhaps. He wished that he had more experience with people and trauma and grief so that he might know the words to make Nigel fucking normal.

Alex felt sick at the thought. He didn’t want Nigel to be normal, he just wanted to ease his aching mind. He couldn’t go back in time to protect Nigel, he couldn’t be his knight in shining armor, armed with a broadsword to slay the monsters that crept into his bed and stole away his childhood. Hell, he couldn’t even say anything to make it better.

To dispute the pain Nigel was in would be a mistake, he knew that

much. But acknowledging it felt like it would be just as bad since Nigel didn't seem to want to talk about it at all. How could Alex talk about what was going on in Nigel's mind without bringing up how obviously deluded he was?

And what if it wasn't Nigel's trauma making him so fucked? What if he just… was?

Alex supposed that it wouldn't matter, since he couldn't do a damn thing to help either way.

"It's alright." He murmured, slowly turning Nigel around so that they faced each other. Alex kissed him then, sweetly, as he ran his hands up and down his bare waist. Nigel felt so fragile under him, so afraid. Alex wanted to protect him, to keep him safe. To take him away and bring him somewhere he could find some peace, or maybe even find some happiness. Alex pulled him closer. "It'll be alright, Nigel."

"While I am alive, I can give you no skull," Nigel whispered so pitifully that Alex felt his heart break.

"I don't want a skull, I want you. Alive, *breathing*." Alex kissed him again, treating him far more gently than he ever had before. "Do you think the knight wanted Maraclea to be dead?" Before Nigel could respond, Alex breathed out a soft laugh. "Of course, he didn't. He wanted her for a wife, not a body in the ground. Just as I want you by my side, where you belong."

"My body can give you no sons." Nigel sounded so broken up about it, so hurt, that Alex almost felt bad for finding the whole situation to be utterly ridiculous.

He snorted softly but refrained from rolling his eyes. "I don't need you

to give me *sons*." But then, thinking better of it, he quickly continued. "We're too young, Nigel. Don't think about kids, okay? I don't want you because you can give me skulls or babies or whatever else you think I need. I don't need them, and I don't want them."

He didn't want Nigel to keep the idea of giving him sons in that crazy head of his for another minute. The absolute last thing he needed was for Nigel to start spiraling into doing something horrible, like stealing someone else's baby and presenting it to Alex like a cat dragging in a still-live bird for its owner. That was, quite literally, the last thing they needed.

"What do you want me for, if I can't give you anything? Is it just because I'm easy?" Nigel's face seemed to sour then."I'm available and willing, so you keep me to take your pleasure out on, even though I can't bear you anything in return? Will you leave me once another *Susan* catches your eye?"

Alex actually rolled his eyes then. "Shut the fuck up." He said, not unkindly, as he cupped Nigel's jaw. "You enjoy being easy for me."

Nigel's curdled milk expression smoothed into that of a puppy who was caught peeing on the carpet, and his shoulders began to curl inwards in shame.

"It's okay to like it." Alex used his hold on Nigel's jaw to lift his gaze back. "It's not wrong just because you can't give me anything in nine months."

Nigel's head shook slightly, almost missable if Alex hadn't been holding him.

"Fucking ridiculous," Alex laughed quietly, shaking his head at the way

Nigel was looking at him with such… intensity. It wasn't funny, but it certainly was fucking surreal. Where did Nigel think he was living? What century? And in what body?

Evidently, laughing was the wrong thing to do. The wide-eyed look disappeared, leaving room for a brief look of betrayal to flash over Nigel's face.

Fuck.

"You *mock* me?"

"Nigel, come on, don't-"

"I give you my body, my soul, my mind. I pledge myself to you and lay down for you and *love you.* I have spilled blood for you. I am your pike and your wife and your Maraclea, and *you* laugh at *me?"*

Alex dropped his hands away from Nigel, groaning as he rubbed his face. He turned and laughed again, walking towards the door. "You're fucking impossible."

"I am yours!" Nigel yelled back, far too loud. If anyone were walking by, they would have heard him without a problem. "We are united!"

"Will you keep your voice down!" Alex hissed back, quickly walking back towards Nigel and slapping a hand harshly over his mouth. "What the fuck is wrong with you?"

Alex let out a cry at the sudden pain, harsh teeth digging into his palm. He tried to tug it away from Nigel's bite, but Nigel had his fingers clutched into Alex's forearm, holding him there. Without a second to think, Alex cracked his palm down against the side of Nigel's face, sending him tumbling.

"You're fucking insane." Alex grabbed his wrist, hissing in pain when he realized that Nigel had taken four deep gouges out of his skin with his nails.

"I'm your *fucking* Maraclea!" Nigel was on the floor, pushing himself up onto his knees.

"The only thing you are is fucked. You're not just fucked, you're deluded. You aren't my fucking wife, you aren't even my boyfriend!"

Nigel's entire body was shaking. Blood smeared across his parted lips and red flesh tucked under his nails, totally wild. Dangerous and unfamiliar, he looked preternatural. An angel of death. Alex's stomach sank as he realized that he had been wrong. Nigel hadn't even begun to show him crazy, yet.

A knock sounded at the door, and Nigel slowly rose to his feet to answer it.

It was a boy Alex didn't know, looking between the two of them curiously before telling Nigel that the headmaster needed to see him.

Nigel nodded and stepped out of the room. When Alex called out his name, Nigel didn't look back.

Chapter End Notes

Is Nigel about to go into his Gone Girl era? 🤔 perhaps

Also, you can find me on tumblr

here!

I'd love to chat and bounce ideas/gush about Like Minds in general, so feel free to shoot me a message!

(I've gone back and added songs to go with the chapters, if you'd like to check them out!)

Chapter 6: Fade Away

Chapter Notes

TW: graphic depictions of violence, implied/referenced CSA

The title chapter is from the song Fade Away by Susanne Sundfør.

This is the kind of love that never goes out of style | 'Cause baby, I know that you'll always be waiting | And I'll always want to come back

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nigel never went to the headmaster's office. He snuck to the bathrooms instead and waited for dinnertime. When he was sure that Alex left his room, he returned. He packed his clothes into his trunk, folded his sheets neatly on his bed, and retrieved the carefully wrapped knife from its home in his desk drawer.

Fingerprint insurance.

Nigel considered the knife for a while, sitting on his perfectly made bed and staring down at it with a blank expression. Then, he smiled.

He was going to kill himself with the same knife that killed Susan. Her blood was still hard against the metal, caked against it like rust. Nigel knew that he would need more than just Alex's fingerprints, he needed something else to seal the deal. To entwine Alex's name forever with his own, so they would go down in history not only as victim and murderer, but as lovers.

After night fell Nigel crept into Alex's room like he had that very first night after their consummation. Alex was gentle with him, stroking his hair instead of pulling it while he sucked him off. Nigel could see the guilt in Alex's when he looked up at him. It felt delicious.

“C’mere,” Alex had said after it was all said and done, trying to pull Nigel into bed. But Nigel only smiled a tight, closed-lipped smile, before leaving Alex’s room for the last time.

In the bathrooms, Nigel discretely spit Alex’s semen into a tiny specimen jar. He usually used them for collecting small insects or blood, but it was the perfect size for his current mission. He tucked it into his coat pocket, collected his things from his room, and walked out the front doors of the school.

When Nigel arrived at his uncle's house, he was welcomed with open arms. His uncle had always favored him as a child before his father stopped allowing Nigel over to visit him, and he was unsurprisingly delighted to see him.

“Giles!” His uncle had cried out when he opened the door, swinging his arms wide, and wrapped Nigel up into a bone-breaking hug. “My boy!”

Nigel suddenly felt like a small animal who had willingly wandered into a cage, only to be horrified to find itself trapped. He shoved the feeling down and held his head high. He wasn’t a rabbit, he was a pike. An embrace wasn’t going to kill him.

He returned the hug, albeit loosely, before having his shoulders grabbed. Nigel forced a smile as his uncle surveyed him.

“Shit, ain’t you the palest thing under the sun!”

Nigel chuckled. “Still as charming as ever, Uncle Henry.”

“Ahh,” Henry chuffed, before pulling Nigel inside. “I haven’t seen you since you were a lad! Now, look at you!”

Nigel nodded, looking around the small flat with curious eyes. It wasn’t the dirtiest place he’d ever seen, but it certainly looked like the home of an aging, alcoholic bachelor. His uncle noticed Nigel surveying the room and laughed good-naturedly.

“If I knew you were coming for a visit, I would’ve tidied the place up.”

Nigel only smiled and tightened his grip on his trunk. “It’s fine.”

“Why are you here, Giles?” He tilted his head down at Nigel, who hated that he had to actively look up to the other man. “Finally had enough of your old man?”

“Something like that.”

“Ah. Well, you know you’re always welcome here, lad. How long d’you need to stay?”

“A few weeks, if that’s alright. Maybe more. If possible, I’d like to stay until after my birthday.” When Henry stared at him blankly, Nigel offered him a small smile, playing bashful. “It’s in ten days.”

Henry gave his shoulders a final, firm squeeze before grinning down at him. “Stay forever, if you need to.”

In some ways, Nigel was lucky that Uncle Henry kept very little in the kitchen. His idea of groceries consisted of liquor, crisps, and a bag of potatoes that Nigel was certain would end his life if consumed. While Nigel was often hungry, it was a blessing that Henry never actually went into the freezer. Besides an old bag of frozen peas, it was empty.

The little glass container went into the freezer, behind the bag, where Nigel was sure it would stay until he was ready for his plan to come to fruition.

Uncle Henry lived in Nigel's mind as a large, imposing man of great stature. The last time Nigel saw him, he was a boy of only ten years old, and all adults seemed larger than life. Upon seeing him again as an adult, Nigel was surprised to find that Uncle Henry was every bit as large as he had been back then. Uncle Henry also looked remarkably similar to Nigel's mother, though that really should have come as no great shock to Nigel, as Uncle Henry was her brother.

He *had* been her brother.

Living with his uncle proved to be outstandingly boring. As far as specimens went, Uncle Henry couldn't even be bothered to be an interesting one.

He drank constantly, hated his job, and the few friends he had hated him. It took Nigel less than a day to come to these conclusions, and despite his love for journaling, Henry mattered so little to him that he didn't bother writing anything about the man.

For Nigel's birthday, Henry bought him a bottle of what he claimed to be 'good Irish whiskey'. They spent the night drinking it. Nigel got drunk, which he found to be interesting until his uncle began to regale about how much fun the two of them used to have before Nigel's bastard father came along and ruined it.

That night, Nigel found himself in a coffin. He lay in his grave, quiet in the dark, with his hands crossed over his chest. He knew that it was only a matter of time before he would be reunited with his betrothed, and judging from the sound of a shovel hitting wood above him, their union would happen soon.

Nigel woke with a sob on his lips, ripping from his chest like he was coughing up a dagger. He checked that the lock to his uncle's spare room was locked, before sinking with it cold against his back.

He longed for Alex with such intensity it felt like he was being ripped in two. His Jack could do anything to him, and Nigel would still yearn for him. Nigel covered his face, hiding his tears from the darkness of the room. He had to stay strong. If he went back to Alex, he would be seen as weak, and Alex would never realize the truth that was their union. Yes, Nigel already made a point by leaving Alex, but now he had to make sure that Alex would never, ever forget it.

As a comfort, Nigel told himself that Alex would have left him if he stayed. He never would have brought him to Scotland, London, or *West Virginia.* Nigel had been misguided, led astray by Alex's actions, as Alex still did not fully understand the extent of their bond. But it was alright. Everything was alright. Nigel would make Alex understand soon enough.

Nigel stayed with his uncle until late August. He would enact his plan once September hit, for he knew that was when Alex would be going to University. Nigel's cooling corpse would make a perfect distraction from schoolwork and set Alex back onto the right path.

The sun was still rising when Uncle Henry stumbled into the kitchen, and Nigel observed him casually as he finished up the last of the dishes from his breakfast.

"D'ya leave one of your… experiments in the freezer?" His uncle was drunk, that much was evident. Nigel answered with a cautious nod. "It looked disgusting. I binned it."

Nigel froze, staring at the freezer with wide eyes before rushing to the trash can. His hands were still dripping with soap as he threw the lid off of it, letting it clatter to the ground as he dropped to his knees in front of it. This was not a part of the plan.

"Binmen came this morning, lad."

Nigel's hands shook. He stood, turned on his heel, and marched back into the bathroom. He didn't bother stripping, simply turned on the water and got into the shower. The cold water ran over him until it grew hot, and then it scalded him. He stayed under the stream until he didn't want to scream from anger but from pain.

Pain was good. Pain would center him. Pain brought forth ideas, and Nigel needed them in abundance.

After his shower, Nigel knew what he had to do. His plan had to change. Nigel would return to Alex instead of his grave, and his uncle would become a murderer.

The estranged, alcoholic uncle became jealous of his sister's family. Heartbroken by her domineering husband not allowing him to visit, he looked for refuge at the bottom of a bottle. It was no surprise that he snapped, not really. It was horrific, however, the way he killed everyone except his sister's only son, whom he always had a soft spot for.

Everyone knew that Uncle Henry always got a little too handsy with Nigel, it was an open family secret, just like Helen's affections were. And Nigel, well, Nigel was used to it. It seemed normal, despite the humiliation he was forced to endure when his uncle's touches lingered in front of his mother, who seemed to do the same behind closed doors.

At least his father put a stop to it, once his side of the family began to talk.

In some ways, it was a bad thing that Nigel was favored by his uncle. It made Nigel a suspect, unfortunately, so he had to plan everything perfectly. What was decent, however, was that everyone knew of Henry's proclivities toward violence. How he was arrested multiple times for assaulting people at the pub, and couldn't hold a job for anything, because he always arrived reeking of liquor.

Nigel forged a letter, *a confession,* in his Uncle's chicken scratch handwriting. He beat his own body and face brutally, even going so far as to choke himself nearly to unconsciousness with a belt he'd stolen from his uncle's room. When he looked in the mirror, bloodied and bruised, he smiled.

After what needed to be done was done, Nigel left the spare room. “Uncle Henry?” He called, walking through the flat with one of his uncle’s hunting knives clutched tightly in his hand. He had wrapped a paper napkin around the handle, keeping it clean of fingerprints.

A groan from the barely-stuffed couch answered him. He walked over and looked down, his eyes flickering over the man in distaste.

“You always were so… pretty,” Henry drawled lazily, his bottle of Jameson rolling out of his hand and onto the floor. “Always so… sweet. N’loved playing games. Do y’remember the games we’d play, Giles?”

“I do,” Nigel said softly, his grip on the knife unwavering.

“Bloody shame that b-bastard father of yours stopped y’from coming to see your old uncle.” Henry hiccuped. “Y’loved playing games…”

“I didn’t.” Nigel reached out, letting a few of his pale fingers ghost over the side of the old man’s face. When Henry tried to lean into the touch, Nigel moved out of reach. “I hated it.”

“Don’t say that,” Henry’s voice shook as he reached upwards as if he was searching for Nigel.

Nigel placed the handle of the knife into his uncle’s palm, waiting until he had his shaking fingers wrapped around it before wrapping his hand around his uncle’s knuckles. He guided the hand upwards until the tip of the blade was pressed flush to Henry’s neck.

“I hated you.” Nigel’s voice carried no emotion as he pressed down,

sliding the knife down through Henry's neck. The skin parted like butter. Henry's eyes flew open, and he quickly began to struggle. Nigel twisted the knife and yanked, before releasing his grip altogether and leaping out of the way as Henry swung at him.

He watched impassively as his uncle choked on blood before procuring the note. He left it on the coffee table and returned to his bedroom. After the sun began to rise, he walked into the living room. Uncle Henry was dead. The couch was soaked in blood and booze.

Nigel counted to ten and began to scream.

Chapter End Notes

> Okay so I'm not super happy with this chapter. I had quite a bit of trouble writing it, but I figured that I don't think I'll be 100% happy with it no matter what, so I ought to just post it and get on to the other chapters.
>
> The song Fade Away by Susanne Sundfør has been on my mind so hard recently, especially with Nigel. Literally I could write an essay about how it relates to Nigel's feelings about Alex, but I'm not going to put anyone through that much of my rambling, so if you're interested here's a little bit of my thoughts.
>
> Nigel's longing for mutual destruction as much as he's longing to return to Alex. He wants the both of them to 'fade away' together, with him dying and with Alex being super fucked by Nigel framing his 'murder' on him. Nigel is falling apart and he blames Alex for it, because Alex constantly flip flops between how he treats Nigel. Accepting him in one breath and denying him and their union in the next- and Nigel is honestly so done with it.

Chapter 7: The Worst Kind of Way

Chapter Notes

> The title chapter is from the song Just One Yesterday by Fall Out Boy.
>
> *I want to teach you a lesson in the worst kind of way | Still I'd trade all my tomorrows for just one yesterday*
>
> \
>
> *If I spilled my guts | The world would never look at you the same way | Now, I'm here to give you all of my love | So I can watch your face as I take it all away*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

No one spoke about Nigel after he left. One day he was there, and the next he was gone. Alex's father never had to call him into the headmaster's office again, obviously pleased that Nigel left the school. In the wake of Nigel's departure, Alex was set adrift. He had no friends, no lovers, and no rivals. Nigel stripped him of being Jack, and he was simply Alex again.

Alex, old Alex, without Josh to be terrible with or Raj to make sure he didn't go too far. Alex, without Nigel to keep him warm.

Alex continued to excel in schoolwork, as there was nothing else he had going on in his life.

Sleeping became a dreaded activity. When Nigel was with him, the night passed easily. He'd simply tuck Nigel into the safety of his arms, sometimes holding a bit too tightly, and drift off. Nigel always smelt familiar to him. The touch of his skin soothed and irritated simultaneously, just how Alex liked it. An apple picked too soon, hard to bite into, bitter on the tongue. Sweetness tasted disgusting now,

and sleep refused to come easily.

But time continued to pass, as it always does. Unrelenting in the face of grief and abandonment. School ended for the summer holidays, and the world kept spinning.

In the fall, Alex would be attending Oxford. But before that, he lived in a small flat in London. It was paid for completely on his own dime, from his own job, and he was quite proud of it. The solicitor he worked under was a member of his father's brotherhood, but Alex worked hard to prove himself. His father's name might have given him his position, but Alex secured his place in the office through his strong work ethic and skill.

Alex kept busy. He had to. If he wasn't working or pursuing his studies at the library, it would quickly become apparent to him that he was deeply unhappy.

There was a spade-shaped hole in his heart, a wound made by the tip of a pike. He couldn't fill it with anything, with anyone, so he didn't even bother. How could he go back to pining for girls after he lost Nigel? He considered it for a while, but how could he possibly bring girls on dates to the movies ever again? How could he hold their buttery-from-popcorn hands and kiss them at their doorsteps after he walked them home? How could he call them his girlfriend and gently rock into them after they caved and let him go all the way?

What was a girlfriend, when he already had a wife?

When Alex slept, he dreamt of Nigel. He knew that Nigel was the one having these dreams, and being able to share them with the other boy brought Alex a worrying amount of comfort. He was sure that he would feel it if Nigel died, so that wasn't his top concern, but any amount of proximity to Nigel felt like a balm to his loneliness.

Knights on grand horses ran through these dreams, spilling blood with broadswords and pikes. Sometimes he dreamt of all-encompassing flames that burned hot as he stood tall and proud in front of a foolish king. Then came the dreams of graveyards. Of mourning and desecrated tombs and a cold body that he desperately tried to warm with his love.

He always woke sweating from those dreams, painfully hard, with *Maraclea* on his lips and tears on his cheeks.

When Alex allowed himself to think about it, he hated Nigel. How dare he infect Alex, merge their minds, and say that they were destined, only to abandon him after one bloody fight? Alex wished Nigel were with him, but only so that he could wrap his hands around that slender, pale throat and squeeze until it turned blue.

He hated himself then, for how natural violence felt to him. Chloroforming Nigel hadn't been hard. Punching him until he bled felt good. Holding him by the scruff of his neck and screaming in his face, using him to vent his anger… Was it any surprise that Nigel left him?

No, that line of thought never went down well for Alex. It was far too easy to shift the blame, to pin everything on Nigel. Pretty, manipulative, crazy fucking Nigel. Dangerous Nigel, who split open a girl for doing nothing more than accepting Alex's affection. Nigel, who wore his dead mother's wedding dress and begged for Alex's cock. Nigel wasn't some innocent waif that couldn't take an insult. Nigel wasn't a boy, and he wasn't a wife. Nigel was a knife.

An implement for killing.

Alex hadn't done anything to Nigel that Nigel hadn't been asking for,

in one way or another. But Alex didn't allow himself to dwell on it very often, and he remained in his London flat alone.

At the end of August, Nigel returned to him.

Alex knew that Nigel was outside his door before he even heard a knock. He opened it without hesitation. Nigel's face was beyond battered. While it wasn't surprising, it certainly disturbed Alex to see.

His left eye looked as if someone had flicked red paint into it. His right, however, was filled with blood. It surrounded his iris like a lover, cupping the blue cusp gently and completely covering the white. A pink, swollen band wrapped around Nigel's neck, as if someone had taken a belt to it, combined with a motley of bruises that spanned from Nigel's collarbone to his cheekbone. His cheekbone, that was so swollen that he looked like a ghost, far gaunter than Alex remembered him to be.

"Did you lose the knife?"

Nigel smiled coyly, looking up at Alex from underneath those gorgeous, dark lashes. It didn't matter that his eyes were filled with blood, he was still just as gorgeous as the day he left. "Is that any way to greet your boyfriend?"

Alex leaned against the doorframe, crossing his arms over his chest. "Where'd you go?"

"My Uncle Henry's." Nigel sounded bored, but his lips twitched like he was trying to conceal a smile. "He killed himself yesterday."

“Oh, did he?”

“Do you think I’d lie to you, Jack?”

Alex wanted to kill Nigel. He wanted to kiss him. He wanted to lock him in his bedroom and never let him leave again.

He made him dinner instead. Pasta from a can, and he ignored the disgust on Nigel’s face when he pulled it from his cabinet.

“What can I say,” Alex said after Nigel verbalized just how deep his distaste ran. “I didn’t have my wife to cook for me.”

Nigel seemed to like that, smirking like he knew exactly how inviting his plush lips looked.

“Can you even cook?” Alex raised a skeptical eyebrow, his eyes flashing with a cruelty that only boarding school boys know. When Nigel didn’t respond immediately, Alex laughed. “Some wife you are.”

“I’ve heard that arsenic is tasteless.” Nigel tilted his head to the side, observing Alex just like he did on those first few nights they spent together, as if he was another animal to cut open and explore. “Would you like to test out your pike, *Jack?”*

Alex laughed, genuinely, for the first time in months. He laughed until his ribs hurt, and then he began to cry.

Despite Nigel having brought a trunk with him, he still commandeered Alex's dresser to steal pajamas. Alex had nothing incriminating hiding in those drawers, but he still stayed in the room to watch Nigel rummage through them and change his clothes.

The watching wasn't done out of a sexual nature. When they fucked in the past, they very rarely had the chance to get completely undressed. Alex wasn't leering when he wanted to see Nigel, he simply missed him. The curve of his ribs, the gentle dip of his waist. The pink smeared across his dangerously pale skin from where something had rubbed against or bumped him.

Nigel bruised easily.

When Nigel pulled off his shirt, Alex saw the bandages that wrapped around his ribs and couldn't hold back a wince.

"Did you do that to yourself?" Alex asked. "Or is your family more fucked than I thought?"

Nigel seemed unbothered by Alex's faux callous tone. "The only family I have left is you." He turned to look over his shoulder, his icy eyes looking darker in the dimly lit room. "I made sure of that, Jack."

Alex pushed off the wall where he had been leaning and pressed into Nigel's space. He curled a hand around the back of Nigel's neck and looked into his eyes. Nigel's pupils grew huge, taking up most of his iris. From up close, the damage was all the more visible, and Alex found his stomach turning at the amount of blood in Nigel's hemorrhaged eye.

“Tell me you missed me.”

“Oh Jack, did you miss-“

“No.” Alex tightened his grip. He felt like throttling Nigel just as much as he felt like cradling him. “Tell me you fucking missed me, Nigel.”

Nigel tilted his head, interested. Alex could have sobbed.

“Please.” He whispered. “Please, *Maraclea.”* He spoke to Nigel like he was prayer, desperation and love and longing heavy on his tongue. Alex pet the back of Nigel’s hair, trying to soothe a response out of him. *“Please,”*

“Jack.” Nigel’s voice sounded like heaven. When Alex kissed him, he tasted like it too.

—

They made love that night. For the first time, Nigel rode Alex. Alex easily could have confused Nigel for an angel as the other boy panted above him, his breath coming out in soft hitches despite the slow face. Alex kept his hands wrapped around Nigel's hips, simply holding him, while Nigel ran his fingers all across Alex’s chest.

In the aftermath, Nigel curled up on Alex like a little cat, acting all sweet and pretty. Alex couldn’t help but think that maybe, just maybe, that’s all Nigel needed. If a good fucking was all it took to keep Nigel sated, and his homicidal urges at bay, Alex would be more than happy to supply.

“I have an aunt that lives in America,” Alex spoke softly as he traced the bruises on Nigel’s skin, hating the discoloration because he wasn’t the one who left them. “She’s… like us.”

“No one is like us.”

Alex huffed. “She’s with a woman. Her wife.” To be honest, Alex didn’t know if they were *actually* married. He didn’t know the legalities of gay marriage in America, or that much about America in general, besides that it was far enough away from the mess that Nigel had made here. “They have a farm, I think. My father doesn’t talk about her much, but I reached out to her after…”

After you abandoned me, is what stays unspoken. *After you left.*

“Why?” Nigel asked.

“I thought you might like it there. They have animals.”

“Animals?”

“Horses, goats. Maybe… chickens? I don’t fucking know, they have a farm.” Alex closed his eyes. He took a breath.

“You want us to go to America?”

Alex shrugged.

“You would bring me to America?”

Alex sighed. “That’s what I’m saying, isn’t it? Why do you make everything so bloody difficult-“

“You would give up Oxford to bring me to a farm?” Nigel cut Alex off.

“You *like* animals,” Alex said simply. Nigel remained quiet, and Alex didn’t need to have his eyes open to know that Nigel was staring at him. “You’re it for me, Nigel. You’re everything.”

Fabric rustled as Nigel pulled the sheets higher up around them.

“I was going to kill myself.” Nigel’s lips moved against Alex’s chest as he spoke. “I was going to make it look like you took my life and defiled my body.”

“I know.”

“I still wish that you had killed me.”

“I know.”

Nigel was silent for long enough that Alex thought he had fallen asleep. When the other boy spoke again, his voice was terribly soft. “Will you take care of me?”

“Yeah,” Alex pressed a long kiss to the top of Nigel’s head. His hair smelled of Alex’s shampoo. “I will.”

Chapter End Notes

I just want to say thank you so much for everyone leaving such kind comments, they literally give me so much motivation and happiness ❤

For this chapter’s song, I see Alex’s point of view as how he wanted to ‘teach Nigel a lesson’ or hurt him for leaving, but after Nigel left, all he really wanted was for Nigel to return to him, and he’d be willing to ‘trade all his tomorrows for one yesterday.’

Nigel reminds me of the lines about spilling guts, because he was planning on framing Alex for his ‘murder.’

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